

spectacle of greatness achieved, moving before him in its quick and proud reality,' he turns with disgust from his 'weak meditations of unexecuted purposes and dreamy-visions of imaginary grandeur' and becomes a worldling; or he writes a romance or tragedy and throws it aside * dissatisfied. Now he plunges into action; again he finds a substitute for the excitement of action in the excitement of thought.' To-day 'in reverie he is an Alberoni, a Ripperda, a Richelieu'; to-morrow he has 'resolved to be a great historical writer,' and expound 'the nature of man and the origin of nations in glowing sentences of oracular majesty.'

Through all these phases or something like them the young Disraeli no doubt passed. Over *Vivian Grey* and *Oontarini Fleming* indeed he had one great advantage. Amid his wildest day-dreams the constant attendance at Frederick's Place must have been a steadying influence, and have introduced an element of discipline into his life that was lacking to both his heroes. When he was most a bookworm it helped to keep the active instincts within him alive; which was the more fortunate as in his father's house and the society that frequented it he can have found little to feed them or to point the way to his subsequent career. 'Neither the fortune nor the family of Mr. Grey entitled him to mix in any other society than that of what is, in common parlance, termed the middling classes; but from his distinguished literary abilities he had always found himself an honoured guest among the powerful and the great.'¹ If the former part of the sentence is true of Benjamin Disraeli's father, no less than of Vivian Grey's, the latter is not. Isaac D'Israeli was a recluse, and while there is no reason to suppose that he was sought by the powerful and the great, it is certain that he never sought them. The pictures that have been drawn of the young Disraeli's securing early initiation into the world of fashion and politics through the guests whom he met at his father's table are devoid of truth.

¹ *Vivian Grey*, Bk. I. ch. 8.